



# Appleby Archaeology Newsletter



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## From the Chair

This has been a remarkable year - not least for the fact that this year's Appleby Archaeology's summer walks were blessed with genuine summer weather. Indeed, so scorchingly summery that our planned trip to Stanwick had to be cancelled for fear that someone might succumb to heat-stroke. Unprecedented!

However the Patterdale rock art and St Mary's Wreay trips went ahead as planned and I think it's safe to say both turned out to be amongst our most memorable outings. You can read about these elsewhere in this Newsletter. The Stanwick cancellation was a disappointment but we haven't totally given up and it's possible that by the time this Newsletter arrives you may already have received notification of new arrangements.

It's now time now to start thinking about our Autumn lectures and I hope you have the "*second Thursday in the month*" marked on your calendars. We start in October with Fiona Edmunds, who will be talking about the mysterious Dark Age kingdoms of the North East. Some of you may remember her fascinating description of the ecclesiastical empire centered around the medieval Furness Abbey and so know this is not a talk to miss.

As an added attraction, I'm pleased to report we now have a new projector bought with a grant from Cumbria County Council's Eden Community Development Group and so Fiona's slides will be even clearer. We are of course extremely grateful for the County Council's generosity.

It will be some time before we know the outcome of our recent application to Heritage Lottery Fund for funding to cover the next stage of Dig Appleby. Suffice to say that Martin Railton has prepared a superb application for "Digging Deeper" (as we are now calling it), and we await developments with the keenest anticipation. Keep your fingers crossed!

And finally - the editor is always keen to receive any (short) reviews, observations, ideas and suggestions about archaeological matters that might be of general interest to the Newsletter readers .... especially with explanatory photographs, maps and diagrams. His email address is on the back page of this Newsletter. It doesn't need to be a work of literary art - just interesting

I look forward to seeing you again at the October meeting,

*Martin Joyce*

## Rooking Rock Art, Patterdale

As you leave Patterdale through the "narrows" by the White Lion on your way to Kirkstone, you might easily miss the turning to your left, just before you negotiate the wiggle where the road does a U-bend round the big pool in Goldrill beck near the Youth Hostel. This turning takes you across the valley through fields to the small huddle of houses that is Rooking. It seems an unlikely spot for a Neolithic settlement. Delightful as it is, this is not much different from any of the thousand other delectable corners of the Lake District. Yet it turns out that it's quite unique. Nothing was known about the Rooking Rock Art until the owner of Place Fell cottage uncovered some unusual marks on a large rock in his garden. He wrote to Stan Beckensall, author of '**Prehistoric Rock Art in Cumbria**', who confirmed they were in fact rather more than unusual. Once word got round, everybody in the area began cleaning the moss off



Puzzling over rock art at Rooking (photograph by Sean Hamer)

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boulders and finding more and more evidence of prehistoric activity. Eventually four sites were selected as representative and were thoroughly cleaned, registered as listed monuments by Historic England and recorded by Stan in his book. Stan's drawing of the big slab at site 2 is rather impressive. However sometime later, Historic England advised the owners of the sites to stop cleaning the rocks and leave any new moss cover well alone. As a result, the rock art is now rapidly becoming invisible once more. The sites seem to be associated with an ancient track leading south from Rooking towards Hartsop on the eastern side of the valley. The track at Rooking would have been well above marshy and heavily wooded ground that probably bounded Ullswater in ancient time, providing an obvious route for anyone heading south over Kirkstone.

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> of May proved to be an excellent day to visit the Rock Art sites .... Appleby Archaeology's first summer walk of 2018. It was a Bank Holiday weekend so there had been some concern about parking. But in fact, Patterdale wasn't over-busy and we were blessed with the most perfect weather you could have wished for – brilliantly sunny with a cool breeze. The trees were all in first leaf and everything looked like a scene from a promotional video! Quite a crowd of us assembled in the White Lion car park and after a bare minimum of faffing about we were off. There were four sites to visit but we were handicapped ..... nobody knew exactly where they were!

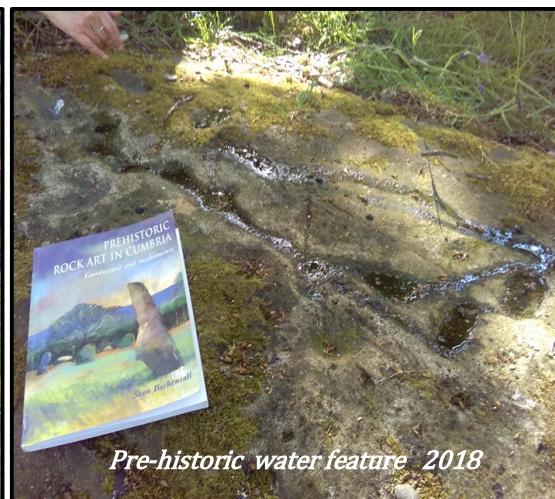
The first port of call was Place Cottage .... a place completely hidden in the trees and without any evidence of a house-sign. The owners had already informed us they'd be away for the weekend, so for a while there was a chance we might have been arrested for trespass. However, the leader was undaunted and clearly had previous experience of breaking and entry. It wasn't long before we were looking at our first cup-marked rock – a long whale-back in the middle of a lawn, liberally sprinkled with round cup-marks and strange lozenge shaped indentations. Now it has to be admitted that the Neolithic Rock Art at Rooking isn't exactly in the same league as Kilmartin, or even Northumbria. There **were** cup and ring marks, but as we were to discover, they are rather shy and weren't ready to reveal themselves without a struggle. But what the Rooking rock art lacks in style, it easily makes up for by its abundance and presence in such an unlikely spot.



Site 2 - sketch by Stan Beckensall



Site 2 - by Harry Hawkins 2015



Pre-historic water feature 2018

The second site was rather easier to find and we were warmly welcomed by the owner of the property wherein it lay. We were shepherded into the garden and directed towards a monstrous slab some fifteen feet high, lying at an angle of 30 degrees or so. Now this **ought** to have been the highlight of our trip. According to Stan Beckensall "*the profuse decoration on this slab is almost unprecedented in Great Britain*". And indeed it is, judging from a photograph taken by Harry Hawkins in 2015. This shows the whole slab covered by a mass of cup marks and weird, writhing grooves. Unfortunately, in the intervening years, the moss had grown back again – errrrghh! Fortunately, one corner of the slab was still moss-free, so we were able to get a glimpse of several cup marks in a neat line with a nice clean groove running alongside. And, as we all agreed, "*it's a jolly big rock*".

The remaining sites were all in more remote locations situated in the middle of fields. The third site was quite extensive and still relatively moss-free. Theories about what all these mysterious marks might signify abound and although it was a hot day and water was in heavy demand and short supply, we were sufficiently intrigued to test at least one hypothesis ... that they formed part of a prehistoric water-feature. Part of our rapidly diminishing water resource was poured onto the top of a slab and we watched entranced as it wiggled down grooves and cascaded from one cup mark to another. Well ..... it's as good an idea as any!

The fourth site was a good kilometre further on down the track and at first, it wasn't clear whether the Apparch group still had the energy to continue, especially with a long walk back to the car park afterwards. However the level of enthusiasm was nothing less than impressive and so on we went. And it was a good thing we did. The site was as impressive as anything else we'd seen so far with much larger, clearer cups on an enormous glaciated outcrop.

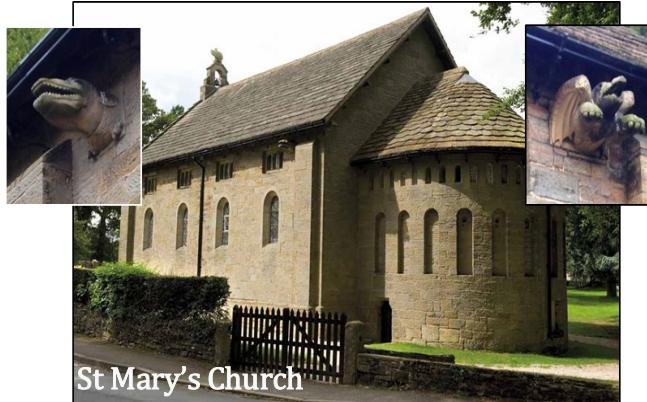
And so a delightful day ended with a gentle amble back along a winding, ancient track way, now populated in our imagination by bands of Neolithic travellers wandering past an idyllic but inscrutable prehistoric version of the Tate Art Gallery. The final stop was at a pub .... rehydrating!

*Martin Joyce*

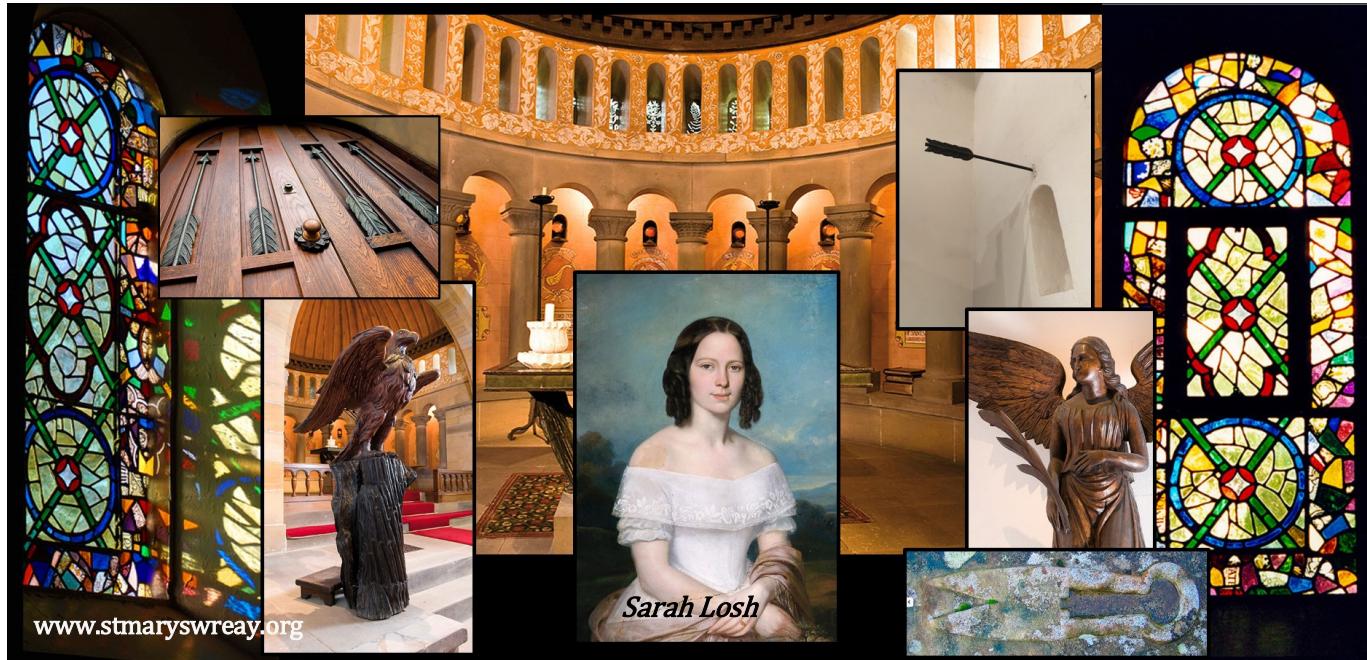
## St Mary's Church at Wreay

A dozen members of the group enjoyed an informative visit to St Mary's Church Wreay one pleasant June evening. We started with a walk around the outside of the church before being surprised and amazed on going inside. There we were greeted by Raymond Whittaker, whose knowledge and love of the church quickly became apparent. He told us that the church had been built 1840-42 by local craftsmen paid for by Sarah Losh, its creator and architect.

Born in 1785, Sarah was the daughter of a forward-thinking industrialist and member of a prominent local family, who mixed with leading thinkers of the day including Wordsworth and George Stephenson. Perhaps unusual for the time she received a good education in both the



arts and science. Her father died in 1814 and she and her sister Katherine inherited the family estate and its industrial interests in the north east. In 1817 she went on the Grand Tour to France, Germany and Italy with her sister Katherine. It was on this tour that she first developed an interest in architecture. Neither sister married



**Inside the Church** (the photograph of the baptistery arrow, was provided by Raymond Whittaker).

and the church is in part a memorial to Katherine who died at the age of 45 in 1835.

There had been a church at Wreay for 700 years but by 1840 it was in a state of disrepair. After some negotiation with the church authorities, building started on land gifted by Sarah. She designed the structure in the form of a Roman basilica, with a rectangular nave and semi-circular apse surrounded by an arcade of fourteen pillars. These form 13 seats recalling Jesus and his twelve disciples. Raymond pointed out many of the features of interest including carvings, statues, windows, and the pulpit (an archaeological feature) carved from a 3000 year old bog oak. Recurring themes of life and death and light and darkness are everywhere. The theme of death is most evident in symbolic arrows, seen most prominently in the entrance door. One arrow in a wall recalls the death of a family friend killed in the Afghan war of 1840. In contrast the theme of life is shown by carved pine cones on door handles, an ancient symbol of fertility and regeneration. The themes of light and darkness are represented by two archangels ..... symbols of light standing on brackets carved with images of bats and a dragon depicting darkness. This theme is seen again in carved shelf supports in the form of a cockerel and an owl representing day and night day. The church has 84 windows. Those in the nave incorporate what may be fragments of medieval glass illustrating the theme of regeneration.

We had time to examine the many features inside the church and to question our guide, before going outside to visit the mausoleum. From the outside, this appears a rather rough construction but inside there was a beautiful statue of Katherine, sculpted from a sketch by Sarah. We were also intrigued by the gargoyles below the eaves of the church and in particular by a dragon-like gargoyle which acted as a chimney for the original heating stove. When alight it apparently looked as though it was breathing fire.

Our guide had made the visit special and was warmly thanked. It is impossible to fully describe this unique church and I would certainly recommend a visit.

Phyl Rouston

## Excavations and Translations

**Heather Edwards** went to an exhibition about the Star Carr Mesolithic site in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge this summer. First discovered in 1947 the unique site has produced an amazing range of artefacts ranging from masks made out of Antler or deer skulls to amber beads, wooden paddles and house timbers. Two books charting the discovery and interpretation of the site have been peer reviewed and are now published on line by White Rose University Press, jointly run by the Universities of Leeds, Sheffield and York. You can download free copies at the following addresses:

**A persistent place in a changing world.** <https://doi.org/10.22599/book1>

**Studies in technology, subsistence and environment.**

<http://doi.org/10.22599/book2>

**Carol Dougherty** and one of her 'transcribing' colleagues has been doing some sleuthing about a glove maker's last will and testament drawn up between 1487-1491. Although living in London, the glove maker had connections with the north, leaving bequests to relatives living in 'Cokermouth' and Graystoke. Indeed his family may have had responsibility for organizing local fighting men and ensuring they were "defensibly arrayed" during the numerous skirmishes with the Scots over the "disputed land". Who said wills were dusty and boring?!

And **Patricia Shaw** visited a Neolithic site (4600-4500calBC) in Transylvania (Romania) called Alba Iulia, through an organization called Grampus Heritage and Training ([www.grampusheritage.co.uk](http://www.grampusheritage.co.uk)). This organization runs programmes designed to allow experienced British volunteers see how archeological excavations are carried out in other EU countries. Earlier work had revealed a funerary complex of that era with disarticulated bones perhaps representing some form of organized burial ritual and a variety of pottery fragments were uncovered when she was on site along with 5-7cm bladed made from both obsidian (from Slovakia) and local flint.



**Alba Iulia**

Trenches, pot-lids and clay 'puddling' depressions



## Digital Research

As the dark nights press in, I always think its good to have a project to work on - ideally something that doesn't involve traipsing around in the damp undergrowth outside. Here is something that I hope may attract someone's interest.

From time to time, Apparch receives requests for information about archaeological matters. We do our best to answer these, but often enquirers could just as easily have found the information they need by looking on the Internet. However, its often difficult to know where to look and some sites are far from easy to use. I had this problem myself when I was planning the Patterdale trip. As it turned out, everything I needed was to be found in fabulous detail on Historic England's website – but it was pure luck that I stumbled upon this site and it took me quite a while to learn how to use it effectively.

I think a few winter nights might usefully be spent building an information page on our website, guiding enquirers towards useful sources of local information, perhaps with hints and tips on how to use them effectively. If you think you could contribute anything to this, please drop me a line using the contact address on the website.

Martin Joyce

**AW-History Website.** When you have a few moments Adrian Waite's website <http://aw-history.co.uk/> is worth exploring. He has constructed a 'photo gallery' of several historic buildings in the north of England, compiled fact sheets and written three books on medieval history

## Winter Lecture Programme

### Medieval Northumbria/Appleby

Fiona Edmunds

**Thursday 11th October**

The Dark Age Anglian Kingdom of Northumbria and its links with Appleby

### The lost early medieval kingdom of Rheged

Ronan Toolis

**Thursday 8th November**

The Kingdom of Rheged is probably the most elusive of the 6th century kingdoms of Britain, long thought to have lain somewhere in NW England or south-west Scotland. This talk will examine new archaeological evidence from Galloway that has revealed a royal stronghold that may once have been the heart of the lost Kingdom

### Thorns - a deserted Medieval Village at Ribblehead

David Johnson

**Thursday 13th December**

High on the limestone fellsides near the Ribblehead Viaduct lie the atmospheric ruins of Thorns, a medieval settlement. After two years of intensive surveying and excavation, Dr David Johnson has been able to construct a comprehensive picture of the history of this fascinating site from monastic times to the present.